From the Archives...

The following song and commentary were discovered at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre in the *Kentish Garland (Vol. 2)*, published 1881; originally from 1771.

The Chatamites
A Song

TUNE – Nancy Dawson

Of all the spots on *Britain's* shore,
Examine ev'ry country o'er,
Sure ne'er was seen the like before,
The well-known town of *Chatham*.

Fair truth directs my honest muse,
Here drunken soldiers and ships crews,
Whores, *Baptists*, *Methodists* and *Jews*,
Swarm ev'ry part of *Chatham*.

Possess'd of every female grace,
Of shape, and air, and blooming face,
By Nature made for *Love's* embrace,
Are fam'd the Girls of *Chatham*.

Whene'er inclin'd to am'rous play
The wanton God points out the way,
Then who so kind, and fond as they?
Ask all the Bucks of *Chatham*.

Great shade of *Hoyle*, assist my quill,
To tell how much thy dear *Quadrille*,
Is eager sought Old *Time* to kill,
In every house of *Chatham*.

Such raptures rushing through each breast,
When e'er a *Pool* the Gamester's blest;
"What pity *Sunday's* made for rest!"
Exclaim the Belles of Chatham.

Proud *Rochester* and *Strood* may talk
Of pavements smooth, and roads of chalk,
For those who chuse to ride or walk:
Not so the folks of *Chatham*.

Contented in their dirty hole,
They *hobble* on with meaner soul,
Contriving how to save the cole;
Who would not live at *Chatham*?

The author of the above lines has partially anticipated the strictures passed on the good town of Chatham by the author of Black's excellent *Guide to Kent*. 'The town,' he declares, 'has almost as many stenches as Cologne, its streets are narrow and squalid; and its only productions are soldiers, sailors, marines, and shell-fish. The shops are filled with those commodities peculiarly favoured by seafaring people; and *the children of Israel* are here established in the various capacities of salesmen, out fitters, tailors, old clothesmen, army and navy accoutrement makers, and bill discounters.'[1]

[1]Compare with the above *Mr Pickwick's* remarks on the four towns, Stroud, Rochester, Chatham and Brampton: 'The principal productions of these towns appear to be soldiers, sailors, Jews, chalk, shrimps, officers, and dock-yard men. The commodities chiefly exposed for sale in the public streets are marine stores, hard-bake, apples, flat-fish, and oysters.' – (The *Pickwick Papers*, April 1836, ch. ii.). Probably Black's *Guide* took a hint therefrom.

The Clock Tower

The Newsletter of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Issue Number 09: February 2008

The Unveiling and Presentation of the City of Rochester Society's Gift to the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

From left to right: Alan Moss, Editor and Membership Secretary, City of Rochester Society, Bob Ratcliffe, President of the City of Rochester Society, and committee member of the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA), Councillor Mrs Sue Haydock, Medway Council heritage champion, and Brian Jenkins, Chairman of Chatham Historic Dockyard Society.

The Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre had good reason to celebrate on 12th December 2007 at the annual Mince Pie Day. Brian Jenkins (pictured right) and the City of Rochester Society donated a wonderful discovery from the Ebay auction website: a counterpart lease or indenture of demise for 25 years and 65 years, for a parcel of ground called Castle Yard within the walls of the Castle of Rochester, dated 1696.

Further excitement at MALSC's Christmas event was caused by the display of another discovery, a previously unknown 1822 map of Rochester. Read the full story in *Archives Update*, our regular column by Borough Archivist, Stephen Dixon.

About The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is the quarterly journal produced and published by the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (FOMA).

Editorial deadlines
The first Monday (or Tuesday when a Bank Holiday occurs) of February, May, August and November. Articles, letters, photos and any information to be considered for inclusion in the journal must be received before this date by the Editor, Mrs Amanda Thomas, 72 Crabtree Lane, Harpenden, AL5 5NS, Hertfordshire; amanda@ajthomas.com

The copy deadline for Issue 10 of *The Clock Tower* is Tuesday 6th May 2008.

Publication date
The third Wednesday following the editorial deadline.

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Front Cover Accreditations and Website Information
The logo for *The Clock Tower* was designed by Bob Ratcliffe.
The banner design (incorporating the logo) and the title *The Clock Tower* were designed by Alexander Thomas.
The Clock Tower is also available on: http://ajthomas.com/theclocktower

Further Information
Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/ or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.ukmedway.gov.uk.
General enquiries about the Friends can be obtained from the Secretary, Cindy O'Halloran, at the above address, or by telephoning +44 (0)1634 332238/332714. Membership enquiries should be directed to the Membership Secretary, Lisa Birch: lisa.birch@medway.gov.uk; +44 (0)1634 332238.

Further information is also available at:
http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/leisure/archives.htm

Oscar nominations, two Eastman medals, a Gold Medal from Photoplay magazine, and the only fellowship award ever given by the Society of Motion Picture Engineers.

Charles married twice, first to Lolita Hayes and then to Doris Guazoni. His daughter, Dorothy Rosher, by Lolita, also went into the motion picture industry and is better known by the name of Joan Marsh. Her first role, at nine months old was in *Hearts Aflame*. Later she played alongside stars such as Greta Garbo and Loretta Young, but she is perhaps best known in the role as a magician's assistant in the Bing Crosby and Bob Hope classic, *The Road to Zanzibar*.

Joan Marsh,
reproduced with the kind permission of Jerry Murbach, www.doctormacro.info

Charles' son by his second marriage was also called Charles (born 1835, Beverly Hills). He followed in his father's footsteps as a cameraman and cinematographer, and today he is well known for his work in films and television.

A far cry from the lime pits of Poplar and Northfleet!

If you have any further information on the Rosher family, please contact Amanda Thomas at amanda@ajthomas.com.

Further information on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre can be obtained on the MALSC CityArk website http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/ or by writing to Medway Archives Office, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Telephone +44 (0)1634 332714; fax +44 (0)1634 297060; email: malsc@medway.gov.ukmedway.gov.uk.

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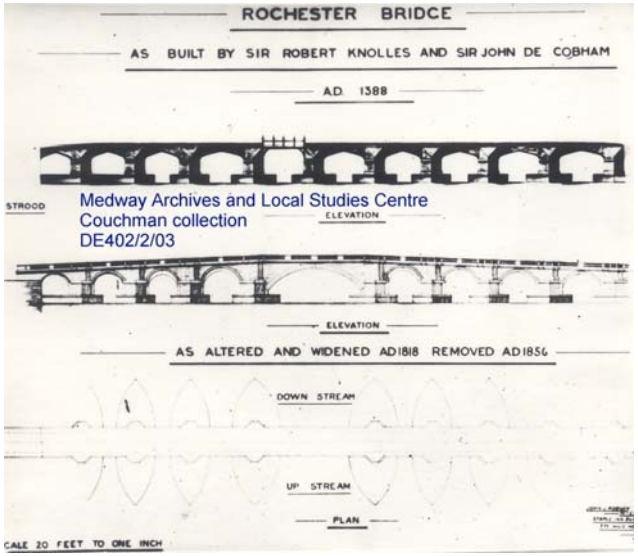


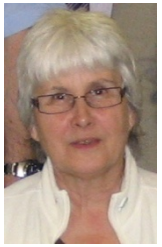
From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman Collection: Facsimile of elevations and plan of the third Rochester Bridge as built by Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John de Cobham in 1388, as altered and widened 1818 and removed 1856, from a drawing by John L. Robson, MICE with notes on chronology, construction and printed sources, c.1960 p.3.

The Reverend Joseph Hindle died in 1874, and George Rosher shortly afterwards in 1877, however, Mary continued to live at The Knowle until her death in 1919. Following her death, and according to Adrian C. Whittaker, "her children set up an endowment for the award of prizes to children at Higham Primary School regarding their knowledge of Holy Scripture...[it is believed] the prizes are still awarded."

The offspring of Henry Rosher (born 1794, Rotherhithe) and Sarah Susannah Gladdish also included Frederick (born 1829, St Pancras, London) who married Mary Sophie White in 1857. Their son, Percy White Rosher (born circa 1861, St Pancras, London) married Mary Burns in 1891. This branch of the Rosher family lived in the St Pancras area of London for over half a century, but Percy and Mary's second son, Charles (born 1885, St Pancras, London), finally broke the trend. Charles studied photography in London and became one of Fleet Street's first newsreel cameramen. Then, in 1909, he moved to America, bought his first movie camera and found a job at the studios of the Horsley Brothers. David Horsley moved his studios out to California in 1911 and thus Charles Rosher became one of the first cameramen in Hollywood, and a firm favourite of the silent film star Mary Pickford. Charles Rosher won Academy Awards for his work as cinematographer on *Sunrise* (1927) and *The Yearling* (1946). He also received eight

From the Chairman

Tessa Towner, Chairman.



Once again it is time to put pen to paper. First I would like to wish all our readers a belated Happy and Prosperous New Year; it is hard to believe we are already well into 2008.

MALSC have arranged some interesting exhibitions and talks for the coming year, one that has caught my eye was the second part of Dr Paul Cullen's talk on *Place Names of Kent*. Dr Cullen's first talk last year was fascinating and enlightening, I think that all those present were amazed at the roots of some of our well known and not so well known place names. This talk is one not to be missed! We are looking also to arrange some trips out and about. The programme can be read on the *News and Events* page below, under *Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions;* it is also available on the Friends' website, http://pic7.piczo.com/FOMA/.

The discovery of an 1822 map of Rochester lying in an attic in Maidstone Road, Rochester, was received with great excitement at our annual Mince Pie Day in December. The map is in need of some conservation work, which I understand from Borough Archivist, Stephen Dixon, is now taking place. The cost of this essential work is being shared between FOMA and others, and it is good to know that our membership subscriptions are going to such a good cause. April Witheridge, daughter of our Vice Chairman, John, has also decided to raise money for the restoration of the map by running for FOMA at the London Marathon – see *News and Events* for further details!

I am also pleased to announce that the *Textus Roffensis* is now available to view on the British Library's website at http://www.bl.uk/ttp2/hiddentreasures.html. Regular readers of *The Clock Tower* may recall that MALSC entered the *Hidden Treasures* competition last year and won. This is the result, and it is well worth a look.

Finally, the Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Annual General Meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 16th April at 7.00 pm to be held at MALSC. I look forward to seeing you there.

The Committee

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himself, Mary and her husband George Rosher. The current owners of the Knowle, Lyn and Michael Baragwanath, have been handed down stories about the Dickens' period. Staff always knew of the arrival of Charles Dickens' carriage at The Knowle as they could hear the ringing of the bells around the necks of his horses.

The Knowle, reproduced with the kind permission of Lyn and Michael Baragwanath.

Lyn and Michael are happy to show anyone around this fascinating house and grounds and can be contacted for an appointment via their website at www.knowlecountryhouse.co.uk

It is thought that The Knowle was built from bricks from the old Rochester Bridge, originally built in 1388 by Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John de Cobham, and demolished in 1856. According to the Rochester Bridge Wardens (and my thanks to Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Secretary, for this information), the stone from the demolished bridge was sold off to Foords, the builders. Most of the stone was used to build The Esplanade in Rochester, however, the stone is very similar to that used in the structure of The Knowle, and some of the houses in Woodstock Road, Strood. Perhaps Joseph Hindle named the house in honour of Sir Robert Knolles.

From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman collection: Photograph of print of view from Frindsbury Intra showing Rochester Bridge and drawbridge, River Medway and river traffic, Rochester Castle, St. Margaret's Church, Rochester and windmills near St. Margaret's church and fishermen in foreground. [c.1780] c.1980 p.4 (upper).

This was the third Rochester Bridge as built by Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John de Cobham in 1388.

Henleys used the site as part of its cable and electrical switchgear manufacturing plant. In the 1960s this became AEI/GEC Henley and was one of the largest employment sites in the Borough of Gravesham with a workforce of around 1,200 in the early 1970s. In the company secretary's office there was an echo of the past in the form of a fine photograph of the renowned Blondin crossing the site on a high-wire in the Rosherville Garden days.

Just outside the Gardens' site there was the Rosherville Hotel, demolished in the late 1960s, and a landing place for pleasure boats which disgorged their passengers into a tunnel leading to the gardens. The tunnel is still there, although you would have a lot of difficulty in finding it."

In its heyday, The Rosherville Gardens were, indeed, a major attraction for ordinary working people, especially those from London, who could travel there and back by paddle steamer. On 3rd September 1878, the *Princess Alice* was making its way from Gravesend back to North Woolwich Pier. The boat was full of visitors to the gardens, but when the *Princess Alice* collided with The *Bywell Castle* steam collier, over 640 of the passengers perished, most by drowning, and trapped beneath the paddle steamer's decks. So putrid was the Rover Thames in those days that most of the victims could only later be identified by their clothing.

Jeremiah Rosher was also responsible for the development of the entire area of Gravesend known as Rosherville, which even had its own station and stationmaster's house. According to Adrian C. Whittaker, the railway was part of the London, Chatham and Dover line built in 1888 and ran from Longfield to Gravesend West station via Southfleet and Rosherville.

Jeremiah Rosher died in 1848, and his estate was divided amongst his children. Jeremiah Burch Rosher, his eldest son (born 1792, Rotherhithe), inherited Trewyn, where he lived until his death in November 1874. Henry (born 1794, Rotherhithe), George (born 1804, Rotherhithe, who married Mary Rachel Brenchley) and Edward (born 1807, Rotherhithe) continued the lime and cement business in the Limehouse area of London, where Jeremiah had acquired a considerable amount of land on which he had also built housing. Charles (born 1796, Rotherhithe) married into the Rickards family and remained at Crete House, William (born 1804, Rotherhithe) also remained in Northfleet and practised as a solicitor.

Henry Rosher (born 1794, Rotherhithe) married Sarah Susannah Gladdish. Together they had six children, including George (born 1832, St. Pancras, London). George Rosher also remained in the Gravesend area, and followed the familiar Rosher tradition of marrying the daughter of a landowner with no sons. George married Mary Hindle, the daughter of the Rector of Higham, Joseph Hindle. Joseph Hindle was born in 1795 of a landed family in Great Harwood, Blackburn, Lancashire. Hindle was the occupant of Gad's Hill House when Charles Dickens decided to buy it in 1856. Whether this cemented their friendship, or if they had known each other previously, is not clear. However, Charles Dickens became a regular visitor to The Knowle, the house at Higham Hindle had built for

News and Events

Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Secretary

On 7th December 2007 we held our second Christmas Wine & Wisdom quiz evening, which was another great success. About 60 Friends' members attended with their families, and we all had an entertaining evening with a lot of laughs. Many thanks to those who attended and donated raffle prizes on the day, but a special thanks to FOMA Chairman, Tessa Towner, our stalwart organiser and Master of Ceremonies. The event raised £288 net profit for the Friends.

The annual Mince Pie Day was held on 12th December, which this year included a sale of books followed by a talk by David Hubbard – *The Social and Architectural History of the Foord Almshouses*. The main attraction, however, was the newly discovered map of Rochester, dating from 1822. Bob Ratcliffe, President of the City of Rochester Society and FOMA committee member, believes the document to be the first definitive map of Rochester and was hand-drawn for Rochester City Council by William Bushell. It shows field names, street names, woods, farms, gardens, orchards, streets and buildings in block plan. If that wasn't enough, there was also the presentation and donation of the 1696 indenture document (as featured on the front cover) by Brian Jenkins and the City of Rochester Society. The full story can be read in Stephen Dixon's regular column, *Archives Update*, below.

A great time was had by all at the annual Mince Pie Day!

We recently made our own first two purchases of documents from the Ebay website, as follows.
Account of John Williams with executors of Robert Child Esq, deceased, for rents and profits of Castle Yard and Garden, Rochester mainly for property tax and partly pertaining to arrears of William Stephens, insolvent, deceased. 1804. 1 item, paper

Draft copy of appointment of piece of land and hereditaments comprising 17 perches in Gillingham, abutting at the front towards Chatham High Street to the south-west, near Chatham Hill, in the rear towards the land of [-] Maddox to the north-east (occupied by John Phelby), and land of [-] Mace (occupied by James Pigeon), part of Hards Town, and towards the south-east Quarrinton House and to the north-west messuage, garden and premises of heirs of Thomas Gilbert deceased, (occupied by Philip Lewis), said land formerly occupied by Thomas Burford, Thomas Stevens, Charles Thompson or last mentioned's undertenants William Pearce, James Turner and Richard Pearce. Parties William Smith and Miss Mary Ann Smith. 7 May 1844. 1 sheaf, paper.

Perhaps if our keen eyed readers spot documents for sale on Ebay relating to the Medway area they would please let us know. Contact details are below.

Items for Sale

MALSC are selling off some equipment (see the list below of what is still available) on a first come first served basis. Buyers must collect, prices are negotiable, payment is in favour of Medway Council and viewing is during normal working hours. If you are interested in purchasing anything let me or April Lambourne know on 01634 332714 or cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk; please include a best offer price.

Microphax 35mm microfiche reader
Microphax 907 35mm microfiche reader

FOMA at the London Marathon!

The star attraction at MALSC at the moment is without question the newly discovered map of Rochester, dating from 1822 (see *Archives Update*). Janet Knight from Local Studies and John Witheridge, FOMA Vice Chairman, had the privilege of unrolling the map for BBC Television News' South East Today programme:
(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/kent/7141122.stm).
The item was shown on the television four times and caught the attention of John's eldest daughter, April. April watched as her father's hands unrolled the map and asked if she could help raise money for its restoration. As a result, April Witheridge will be running for the Friends of the Medway Archives at this year's London Marathon on 13th April 2008. This will be her first attempt, though her sister Cheryl, a veteran of ten London marathons, will be able to give her some tips!

By 1807, Jeremiah, the younger, and Sarah had had eight children in Rotherhithe, but before long, the entire family were living at Crete Hall in Northfleet. According to Adrian C. Whittaker, a Gravesend historian and member of the Kent Family History Society, "Crete Hall was built by Benjamin Burch in about 1800 on land that he had formerly quarried the chalk out of. [Today] Burch Road close by, apparently takes its name from Benjamin Burch. Henley's Cable Works was built on the site of Crete Hall Park in 1906, the house Crete Hall was used by the manager of the works (and later as a works canteen) before being demolished in 1937."

Crete Hall 1826, as seen in The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics, b*y R. Ackermann. Published in 1809-1828; original coloured aquatint from the private collection of Amanda Thomas.*
The illustration clearly shows the proximity of the Hall to the water. Today Northfleet's Crete Hall Road encompasses an industrial area, once part of the old estate, and situated due south of Tilbury. An ideal position for the Roshers to view the passage of their raw materials up and down the Thames.

Despite his shrewd business instinct, Jeremiah Rosher clearly had a philanthropic side to his nature, as in 1839, he sold a disused chalk pit in Gravesend to a George Jones of Islington, who turned the area into a pleasure ground known as the Rosherville Gardens. Adrian C. Whittaker provided a potted history of the Rosherville Gardens:

"More accurately, the Rosherville Gardens, Northfleet, albeit within a few yards of the Gravesend boundary...opened in 1839, closed in 1899, re-opened in 1903, restored (presumably unsuccessfully) in 1936, and with the last buildings on the site demolished in 1938/9 when Henleys acquired the site. A popular tourist destination in its day, there were 25,000 visitors to the site on Whit Monday 1904.

John Brenchley and Mary Harman, who lived at Wombwell Hall near Gravesend in the early 1800s. John was a banker and distiller in Gravesend, probably running branches of the same businesses in Maidstone owned by his father, John Brenchley, the elder, and set up by other earlier members of the Brenchley family and their business partners, which also included the Bishop family. The distillery in Maidstone produced an inexpensive variety of gin, known as Maidstone Geneva, and worked successfully side by side with the bank for many years until the driving force behind them, George Bishop, died in 1793. The management skills of George's heir, Argles Bishop, were not so successful, the distillery ran into problems and went bankrupt, and by 1814 his bank also had to close.

It is unclear whether this 1814 incident was related to the bankruptcy case in 1826 concerning John Brenchley, the elder, of Maidstone and his son, John Brenchley, the younger, of Wombwell Hall, Gravesend. Nevertheless, this shift in fortunes appears to have been temporary and did not seem to affect the Brenchleys' relationship with the Roshers. By 1861, John and Mary Brenchley had died, and Mary Rachel's brother, Thomas Harman Brenchley (born 1822, Milton), had married Emily Sarah Vaughan in Cardiganshire, Wales. It is possible that the move to Wales may have been prompted by the Roshers who also had Welsh connections, though some distance away in Monmouthshire.

Jeremiah Rosher senior may have been born in Suffolk, and he likely moved to Trewyn, Monmouthshire, in the early to mid 1700s; more work needs to be done to establish this possible link to Mary Patterson's line. He may even have married Sarah Stanton in Suffolk, but their son, Jeremiah, was born in Trewyn in 1765. Sarah died between 1765 and 1774, and Jeremiah senior then shrewdly married Elizabeth Eysham, or Evesham, widow of William Shaw. Elizabeth had inherited from her grandfather James Eysham a mansion at Trewyn (according to *Kelly's Directory for Monmouthshire, 1901*, built in 1695) and a considerable amount of land.

The younger Jeremiah Rosher inherited his father's keen business sense. In 1791, he married Sarah Susannah Burch of Gravesend, daughter of the successful lime merchant, Benjamin Burch, and by his late twenties, Jeremiah had moved from Trewyn and established himself in London as a lime, coal and timber merchant. In partnership with his wife's sister, Mary Burch (heiress to Benjamin's fortune), Jeremiah's business empire stretched from Rotherhithe to Poplar in London's docklands. Here not only did he trade in lime but he also excavated the commodity, the main ingredient for mortar, concrete, plaster, renders and wash, and essential for the building of a newly industrialised London. According to British History Online (http://www.british-history.ac.uk), in 1801 and 1804 Jeremiah bought around three acres in Poplar in the area known as the St Vincent Estate and the east side of the Westferry Road. He also acquired a building in Limehouse where a lime kiln was situated to process the freshly mined material.

Further information can be obtained from FOMA Vice Chairman John Witheridge, C/o Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Alternatively, please contact Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Secretary, at cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk or on +44 (0)1634 332238/332714.

Support April Witheridge and FOMA in the London Marathon!

Calendar of Forthcoming Events and Exhibitions

31st January to 29th March 2008
Rochester Cathedral: a selection of pictures from the Cathedral's Photographic archive.
An exhibition by Pat Salter.
Exhibitions are free to view.

16th April 7.00 pm
Friends of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre AGM
There will be two short presentations by Dr Sandra Dunster and Dr Kate Bradley
Refreshments will be provided. Please come along and lend your support.
Free of charge.

26th February 7.30pm
A talk by Prof David Killingray:
Grassroots politics in Kent in the 19th and 20th centuries
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members

31st March to 9th May
Exhibition: Barges and the Medway Barge Match
Exhibitions are free to view.

31st May 2008
This year is the 100th annual Barge Match and we are hoping to follow the race on the Kingswear Castle. The Kingswear will get under way around 10 am, returning at about 5pm. The projected cost will be £20 – 25 per head. If you are interested in participating, please contact Cindy O'Halloran so that we can block book tickets; contact details can be found below.

8th April 7.30pm
A talk by Dr Paul Cullen:
Place Names in Kent (part 2)
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members

29th April 2008 7.00pm
A talk by Tony Farnham:
Sailing Barges in their Heyday
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members

12th May to 24th June
One for the Road, the story of Chatham Pubs
An exhibition by Roy Murrant
Exhibitions are free to view.

27th May 7.30pm
A talk by Roy Murrant:
One for the Road
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

10th June (time to be confirmed)
A talk by Catherina Clement:
The Role of Rochester Cathedral 1640 to 1660.
This talk will explore the changes and politics at the Cathedral during the Civil War period.
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

24th June 6.30 pm
We will be meeting at Rochester Cathedral for a guided tour. This will hopefully include some areas not normally open for viewing. The cost will be £5.00, which will include a donation to the Cathedral.

26th June to 1st August
The Bombing of the Drill Shed
An exhibition by Drill Hall Library Staff
Exhibitions are free to view.

Editor's Footnotes

Amanda Thomas is a freelance writer and public relations consultant. Born in Chatham, but now based in Hertfordshire, she belongs to several historical organisations, including the Kent Family History Society, the North West Kent Family History Society, and The Council for British Archaeology; she has a degree in Italian from the University of Kent and is a member of their alumni association.

Amanda has recently been investigating the history of the Rosher family of Gravesend, and here she discusses her preliminary research.

The Rosher Family: From Gravesend to Hollywood

A new member of the Friends, Mary Paterson, recently contacted Borough Archivist Stephen Dixon with a query about an ancestor (see the *News and Events* pages). Edward Alfred Rosher was the refreshment contractor at the Missionary Loan Exhibition, held in Rochester from May 11th to 19th 1898, and shortly afterwards, in about 1900, he left England and Emigrated to Sydney, Australia. Edward was an Alderman on Manly Council, near Sydney in the 1920s, and died there in 1925.

Edward Alfred Rosher,
from the private collection of Mary Patterson.

Mary's branch of the Rosher family originates in Suffolk, and although she was aware of another branch in Gravesend, she could not see how they connected. One wonders if Edward Alfred's involvement at the Missionary Loan Exhibition was coincidental or if the two branches were still known to each other at this time.

I do not have answers to these questions, however, I was particularly intrigued by Mary's query as I too am connected to the Rosher family. My connection is through the 1851 marriage of Mary Rachel Brenchley (born circa 1824, Milton, Gravesend) to George Rosher (born 1804, Rotherhithe), fourth son of Jeremiah Rosher and Sarah Susannah Burch. Mary Rachel Brenchley was a distant cousin of mine, who descends from a common ancestor, John Brenchley (born circa 1655). Mary Rachel was the daughter of

On 8th September she made her way back to London, 'Din'd again at Dartford, not quite so reasonable or civill the second time…..Hop'd my Journey woud do me good, as sure the Exercise and Change of Air might be expected to do, yet soon after was ill…'. The rest of her diary entry for that day turns to international politics and the Prussian invasion of Saxony.[ii]

i A sutler was a person who followed an army and sold provisions to the soldiers.
ii A. Savile (ed), *Secret Comment: the diaries of Gertrude Savile, 1721-1757* (Nottingham, 1997), pp.318-20.

Dr Sandra Dunster can be contacted at the following addresses:
Email: s.a.dunster@gre.ac.uk
Address: Dr Sandra Dunster, Team Leader EPE VCH Kent, School of Humanities, University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, London SE10 9LS.

Another view of Chatham's past can be read on the back page in From the Archives…

8th July 7.30pm
A talk by Drill Hall Library Staff:
13 Sep 1917 The Bombing of the Drill Shed
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

5th July
A Saturday voyage up river on the Kingswear Castle. This event is dependent on enough members showing an interest.

4thAugust to 14th September
Exhibition: 150th Anniversary of the Strood to Canterbury Railway
Exhibitions are free to view.

6th August 7.30pm
A talk by Bob Ratcliffe:
Railways of Rochester
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

16th September to 24th October
Ad Perpetuam Memoriam-350th Anniversary of Oliver Cromwell's death
An exhibition by John Witheridge
Exhibitions are free to view.

30th September 7.30pm
A talk by John Witheridge:
Ad Perpetuam Memoriam-350th Anniversary of Oliver Cromwell's death
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

28th October to 2nd December
Who? What? Where? When? Unidentified Photographs in the Archives
An exhibition by Tessa Towner
Exhibitions are free to view.

4th November 7.30pm
A talk by Irina Shub:
Reminiscence of an Immigrant - my life in Soviet Russia 1970-1990
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

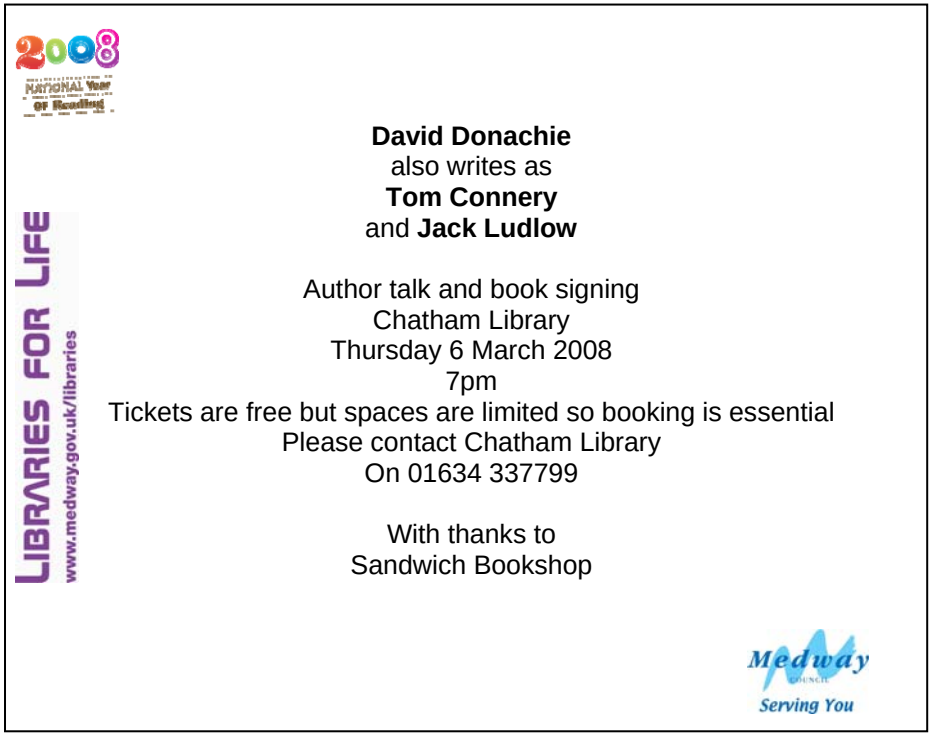
4th December to 3rd January 2009
Post-war Housing Development in Medway
An exhibition by MALSC Staff
Exhibitions are free to view.

Wednesday 10th December 10.00 am to 12.00 noon
Mince Pie Day
at 2.30pm
A talk by Michael Gandy:
Seeing it through their songs
Talks are £3 for members £4 non-members.

Events to be Arranged

We are also planning a visit to Starkey Castle in the early summer. Bob Ratcliffe has arranged this visit on our behalf. As you may be aware, Starkey Castle is not open to the public and this will be a rare treat. As we are limited to a group of 20, this will have to be strictly members only. The cost will be £5.00. Date to be confirmed.

Unless otherwise indicated, all the above are held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Further information is available from Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Secretary, at cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk
or on +44 (0)1634 332238/332714.



> 'I set out from Town on Monday the 6th, Dined at Dartford 15 miles; a small town, very civill and moderate usage. Lay at Rochester, 15 miles further at the Black Bull; tollerably civill treatment but intollerably dear, occasioned by the great number of people [visiting] the Camps. 'Tis a very old and ugly Town; did not see one brave street or good house in it. Pretty large, lies low upon the River Medway, which being at low water when I saw it, seem'd a poor little one. From the Bridge the Sea may be seen……The 7th went thro' Maidstone to the Hanoverian Camp at Cox's Heath, above 8 miles terrible Road, Steep Hill, narrow dirty lanes and the Turnpike Road only mended with large loose stones. Jumbl'd and bruis'd black and Blue.'

She spent an hour and a half visiting the Hanoverian camp, which she reported held 12,000 men: '…it reached 2 miles … how regular , how neat, how civil, how good-natured, sober and endustrious'. Then she dined at Maidstone: 'a pretty large Town – believe the County town, but nothing remarkable that I saw', and made her way back to Chatham at dusk. In Gertrude's opinion, compared to their well organised Hanoverian counterparts, the three to four thousand troops in the English camp at Chatham were '…idle, drunken, rude, barbarian Hottentots…..Sutler's Tents in abundance, full of Men and Barrells.[i] No Complesance in Officers, no Civillity or good-nature in the Common Men. No Religion I fear; O shameful and sad.'

She then turned her attention to Chatham itself.

> 'Chatham seems only a continuation of Rochester, there being no intermission or space between the Houses nor paved way. From the hills about it, it seems one long street only. Looks like what it is – a seafaring, Tarlike Town. Saw very few Ships; the 'Princes Amelia' of 90 Guns almost ready to be launched.'

Finally, Gertrude returned to Rochester to spend the night in another inn and to complain again about the cost and the poor service.

> 'Return'd to Rochester; hoped to mend my quarters and lay at the Crown, but much worse off there than at the Bull – a good deal dearer and worse treatment. The 2 Camps are a fine Harvest to them and they make the most of it, tho' at both Inns we were better off then others who came later, and coud neither get Beds nor Stables.'

The Victoria County History at MALSC

Dr Sandra Dunster

Dr Sandra Dunster was appointed by the University of Greenwich as Kent Team Leader for the Victoria County History's England's Past for Everyone (EPE) *in October 2007. With the help of volunteers, she is researching and writing a history of the Medway Towns, to be completed by February 2010. She previously taught local and regional history at the University of Kent. Sandra was born and raised in Whitstable and, after 25 years absence, returned to live there in 1999.*

'A very old and ugly Town' and 'A seafaring, Tarlike Town': An Eighteenth Century Woman's View of Rochester and Chatham

For me, one of the most enjoyable lines of enquiry when beginning to research the history of any location is finding out how people in the past have described the place and its people. While it's true that such accounts and descriptions may be biased or inaccurate, seeing a place through the eyes of someone who was there at the time certainly helps to bring the past to life. Many of you will already be familiar with the words of Lambarde, Celia Fiennes, Defoe and Dickens on the Medway Towns, so I thought you might enjoy a less well known, although not particularly flattering, description of Rochester and Chatham.

This somewhat bad-tempered account of a stay in the Medway Towns comes from the diary of Gertrude Savile (1697-1758). Gertrude, the daughter of a Yorkshire clergyman and sister of Sir George Savile, kept a detailed journal throughout her adult life. Much of what she wrote described her inner turmoil during her frequent bouts of depression but she also took pains to describe her daily life and experiences and to comment on current affairs. Her views on people, places and events were usually expressed in a forthright manner and the diary entries which follow are no exception.

In September 1756 Gertrude decided to take a trip from her London home to view the English and Hanoverian army camps on the Medway. She recorded her progress, the service that she received at the inns where she stayed, her impressions of the troops and her opinion of Rochester and Chatham.

FOMA Members

Mr Freddie Cooper

Mr Freddie Cooper, pictured in 1998.

We are delighted to report that FOMA has invited Mr Freddie Cooper to become an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his interest and commitment to the promotion of local history.

Born in 1917 at 22 Napier Road, Gillingham, Mr Cooper was brought up within a farming community which still herded cattle along the main roads. In 1998, at the St George's Centre, Chatham Maritime, Mr Cooper was made the 20th and last Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Gillingham before the creation that year of the new Medway Towns authority. Dated 25th February 1998, the commendation on the Freedom Scroll reads:

'We the Mayor and members of the Council of the Borough of Gillingham in recognition of the long, distinguished and meritorious service rendered by you to the Borough over a period of many years as Councillor, Alderman, Deputy Mayor and Mayor and for your commitment to education in Rainham and Gillingham; your work and support for the Rochester Bridge Trust; local charities and societies; and civic society; we express and record our gratitude.

Further we record our appreciation for your work to promote Gillingham as a place for economic and industrial regeneration; and the consequent creation of employment opportunities.

Also, we record out gratitude for your tireless efforts in promoting the well being of Rainham; its people and their interests.

And acting by resolution of the whole Council do by these present admit you as Honorary freeman of the Borough and confer upon you the rights, privileges, honours and distinctions appurtenant thereto.'

Somewhat amusingly, the honour also permitted Mr Cooper to drive sheep across local bridges.

Freddie Cooper's working life began in 1933 as a junior insurance clerk in Rochester, earning 15/- (75p) a week, but two years later he moved to the Kent Electric Power Company (Seeboard), from which he retired in 1974 as a Management Accountant. During the Second World War he served in the RAF, and in that pre and post war period, he worked as a Rainham local reporter for the *Kent Messenger* and *Observer*, writing articles right up until the late 1960s.

Life in local government began in 1951 when Mr Cooper was elected Councillor to Gillingham Borough Council. He was Alderman from 1960 to 1967, Deputy Mayor for 1957/8 and 1961/2, and Mayor in 1962/3; he also held posts on various different committees, including Chairmanship of Health, Housing Finance and Industrial Development. In education he served as a Governor and Chairman of Governors in many different Gillingham schools over a period of 43 years. Mr Cooper was also a member of the Rochester Bridge Trust, acting as Junior and Senior Warden from 1872 to 1974 and Bridge Clerk from 1974 to 1980. His contribution to the Gillingham and Rainham community was extraordinary, and yet he still found time to play cricket and tennis and devote his time to many local charities, including the Friends of Wisdom Hospice and Cobham College almshouses.

Freddie Cooper has accepted FOMA's invitation with thanks.

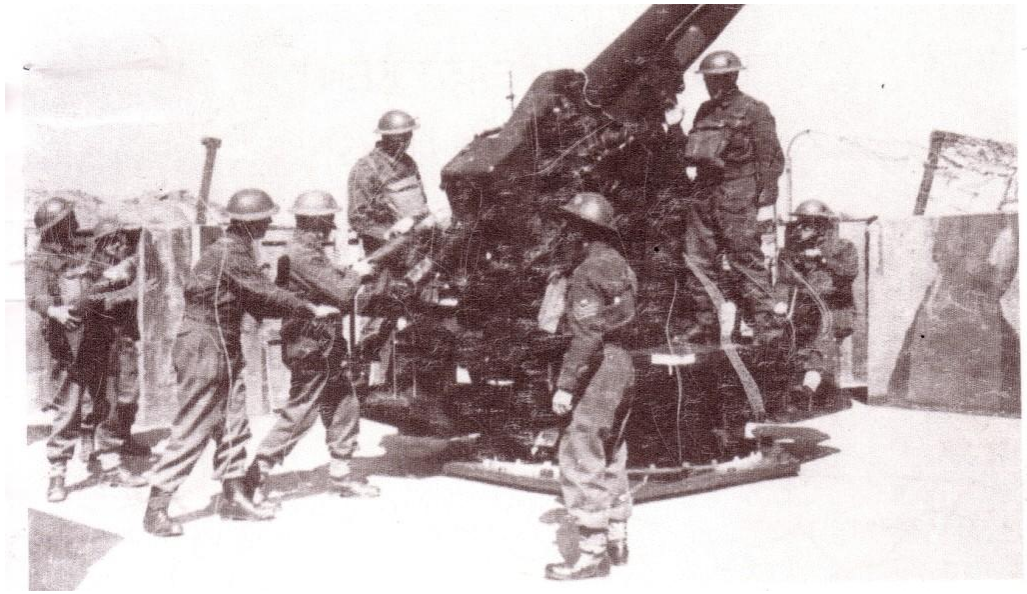
Mrs Mary Paterson

One of the latest FOMA members is Mary Paterson of Bromley in Kent, to whom we extend a warm welcome. Mary first contacted Borough Archivist, Stephen Dixon, asking for more information about the Missionary Loan Exhibition, held in Rochester from May 11th to 19th 1898. Mary's ancestor, Edward Alfred Rosher (pictured) was the Refreshment Contractor for the event. Shortly afterwards, in about 1900, Edward left England and Emigrated to Sydney, Australia. He was an Alderman on Manly Council, near Sydney, in the 1920s, and died there in 1925.

EA Rosher at the Missionary Loan Exhibition, 1898, from the private collection of Mary Patterson.

E.A. Rosher, was the favourite brother of Mary's great grandmother, Mrs Alice Elizabeth Beecher, formerly Walker, née Rosher. She was also born in Hadleigh, Suffolk, in 1856 and lived at 168 Windmill Rd, New Brompton, Gillingham from 1895 to about 1914.

Mary Paterson's query prompted The Clock Tower *Editor, Amanda Thomas, to investigate further the Rosher family of Gravesend, to whom she is related by marriage. The link between the Suffolk and Gravesend Roshers is still not understood – unless any other FOMA members know otherwise! Amanda's article can be read in* Editor's Footnotes, *below, and any further information on the family can be sent by email to amanda@ajthomas.com.*



One of the heavy anti-aircraft sites at For Borstal, built to defend Chatham and its dockyard. Royal Artillery gunners and A.T.S. girls served in this H.A.A (Mixed) Battery. Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Mrs A. Viebahn and to the memory of Mr. D.G. Collyer (KAHRS) of Deal, Kent Editor of Buzz Bomb.

The next day, especially if it was a Saturday, many of the local lads would be out searching for the shrapnel of the exploded shells used on the previous night's activity. Some pieces were still warm.

As I had recently written and photographed a history of fortifications in the area, I decided to go along and introduce myself. I spoke to the one person who could answer my question of many years standing! I asked Bill Ripley, an ex bombardier who served on the guns, and now a firm friend, how many guns were mounted at Fort Borstal? The reply was four, yet I had always thought there was only one. Bill explained: it sounded like a single explosion because all guns fired simultaneously. The four AA guns had been installed in concrete emplacements at Fort Borstal prior to World War Two, and a large hutted camp constructed at the rear to house the gun crews and ATS personnel.

Having lived at 7 Henry Street, Troy Town, Rochester, until I was ten years old, and being situated near to the Short Brothers' seaplane works and the Chatham Dockyard, we were a prime target. We were often raided by the German Luftwaffe bombers – and not forgetting the 'doodlebugs'. These flying bombs were often seen in the daylight hours, flashing across the sky making their familiar, horrendous noise. One night the siren went, warning everyone to take cover. Mum bundled us kids with great haste into the garden and down into our Anderson shelter (built by my dad before going to war in the Royal Navy). Sometimes we all crouched under the kitchen table, our gas masks near to hand, special ones for babies, Mickey Mouse style for infants, and different, larger, ones for children and adults. The hum of aeroplanes droned overhead only broken by the roar of the gun we all came to call Borstal Lizzie, hurling its four and a half inch shells into the searchlight-bright skies. On the All Clear, we hurried back to the house for cocoa or Ovaltine, then back up to bed!

Soldiers cleaning out the barrel of a 4.5" AA gun at Fort Borstal, 1940.

Archives Update

Stephen Dixon, Borough Archivist

British Library Hidden Treasures

I am glad to report 30 selected pages from the *Textus Roffensis* (DRc/R1) were published on the British Library (BL)'s *Turning the Pages 2* web pages on 23rd January. Readers will recall from the previous edition of *The Clock Tower* that the manuscript book was entered into a BL competition to identify the hidden treasures from around the country and we were fortunate enough for our entry to win first place. The *Textus Roffensis* pages will remain hosted on the BL's web site for three years.

Turning the Pages technology allows Internet surfers to virtually turn the pages of a book thus adding a sense of realism and feeling of coming into contact with books so precious or fragile they are not normally handled. Most of our users, family historians and genealogists, are already accustomed to using microfilm copies of parish registers for conservation reasons so this principle has been established for some time. The *Textus Roffensis* had already been fully digitally photographed and published on *CityArk* but we hope the BL pages will attract a wider and more varied audience.

I was interviewed by Dominic King on BBC Radio Kent on 28th January and was glad to be able to explain the significance of such an important Kentish book to a Kent audience. Readers may see the *Textus* online at http://www.bl.uk/ttp2/hiddentreasures.html but please note you may need to download MS *Silverlight* graphics software first. Happy viewing.

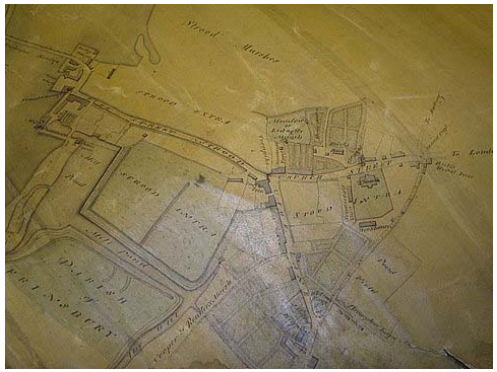
Map of Rochester 1822 (DE1161)

Several months ago we were alerted to the presence of a number of maps in the attic of a small local private school, The Cedars, in Maidstone Road, Rochester. The building had been the headquarters of the Rochester City Council engineer and surveyor's department prior to the disbanding of that authority as part of the great local government reorganisation of 1974. For a few more years into the 1980s the building was used by the successor authority, Rochester upon Medway City Council but was eventually acquired by the school, the maps having been left behind.

The school's proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Gross, informed their local ward member councillor Ted Baker, who by coincidence had first been elected to the old Rochester City Council in 1961. He and I visited the school to inspect the maps and it was immediately apparent that one map was of great historical importance, while several others were a useful record of 20th Century town planning and the residue were of minor interest. My colleagues and I were able to collect them from the school during our stocktaking closure, one map being so long however that it couldn't be transported by van and had to be

carried to MALSC by Clive Woollacott (library service facilities assistant), Janet Knight, local studies assistant and Cindy O'Halloran, senior archives and local studies assistant, resulting in more than a few ribald comments on the way.

This most important map is dated 1822. It is believed by Bob Ratcliffe, President of the City of Rochester Society (and FOMA committee member), to be the first definitive map of Rochester and was hand-drawn for Rochester City Council by William Bushell. It shows field names, street names, woods, farms, gardens, orchards, streets and buildings in block plan and is accompanied by a reference or key. The scale is 3 chains: 1" or 26 5/8": 1 mile and the map measures 85" x 81". The photographs show the map before it was sent for conservation and repair.



While it was apparent the map is of great historical interest, unfortunately it was also rather the worse for wear after possibly the best part of nearly two centuries in the sooty atmosphere of probably several Dickensian style garrets in its lifetime. Consequently, the map has been sent for conservation and repair and should be available for research by the end of February or March. The map comes complete with its original tar paper wrapper, which is being retained.

The map was the star attraction on Mince Pie Day in December 2007 and drew considerable media interest, as the result of which English Heritage, our council rights of way colleagues and others have expressed an urgent interest in examining the map on its return from the repairers. It is always satisfying when an historical document turns out to have practical value as well as purely historical interest.

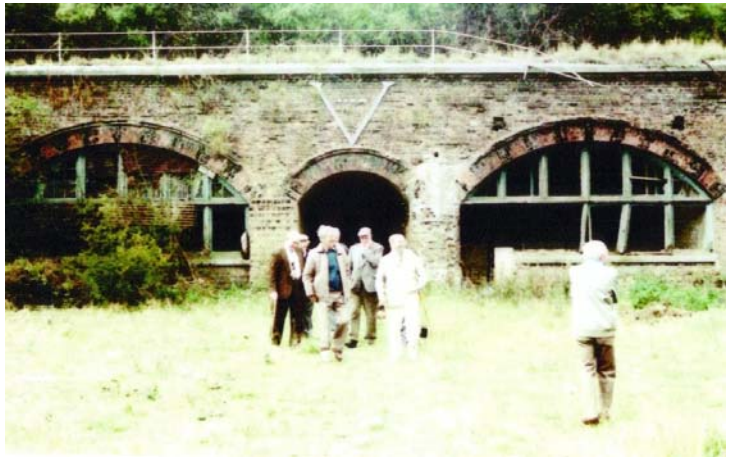
Borstal's Wartime Umbrella

Peter Burstow

FOMA member and Medway resident Peter Burstow has been retired from full time employment for over five years. Most of Peter's working life, apart from two years' National Service in the Royal Air Force, was spent in the printing industry and with British Petroleum. Since retirement, much of Peter's time has been taken up with the photography and writing about the Napoleonic fortifications and the history of Rochester and Medway. Two of his works are available to read at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre: Fort Clarence *and* Fort Horsted.

In this article Peter gives us a taste of his passion for the Medway forts and the guns they housed in World War Two.

My interest in the Borstal Gun, or Guns, began with an article I read by chance in a local Medway newspaper last year (2007). A plaque was to be presented at a ceremony in the Guild Hall, Rochester, to commemorate soldiers who had manned the AA (anti-aircraft) guns at Fort Borstal in World War Two. Evidently after a long campaign, former traffic warden, Mr Ted Dartnell, aged 70, saw his hopes come to fruition. His brother George served at the fort with 166 (City of Rochester) Battery – part of the 55th (Kent) H.A.A. Regiment Royal Artillery (T.A.). Paid for and presented by Mr. Ted Darnell, the plaque was to be unveiled by the Deputy Mayor of Medway, Councillor Stephen Kearney, who had given Ted considerable support – the plaque was expected to be mounted on the wall of the staircase of the museum.

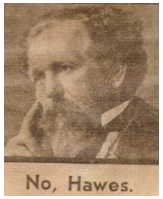


Bill Ripley (centre) revisiting Fort Borstal in 1998.

Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Bill Ripley.

A Love of Nature

Dickens loved the shrubbery at Gad's Hill House. A Swiss chalet, a gift from the French actor, Charles Fechter, was erected here and the upper room became Dickens' study. The chalet is now situated in the garden of Eastgate House, Rochester High Street.

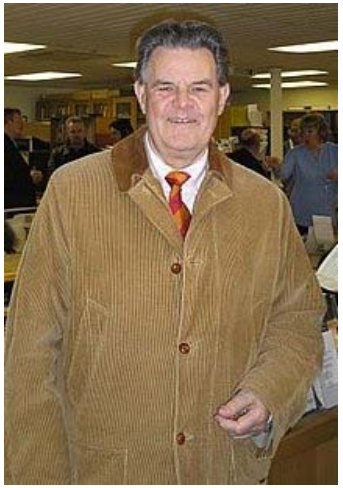


Hawes ran single-handed a two-acre garden containing an abundance of fruit trees and wonderful assorted vegetables throughout the Second World War. I particularly recall being taken to see sweet corn that he had planted secretly in a corner for me – quite a new item back in the Forties. In this heavenly place was an idyllic, thatched summerhouse, with small panes of glass, hung with cobwebs. This was his bolthole, a retreat from all the pressures of his wartime role as Mayor of Chatham.

From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman collection: Postcard photograph entitled The Wilderness, Gad's Hill Place *comprising view of The Shrubbery on north side of Gravesend Road, Higham, possibly looking north-west from just inside boundary wall adjacent to Gravesend Road, showing in foreground tree stump, lawn and shrubs and in middle ground and distance lawn and trees. Published by [Edwin] Harris and Sons [of Ye Olde Curiositie Shoppe, [*sic*] 151 High Street, Rochester] Published c.1920 DE402/24/p.46 (L)*

Finally on this subject I am glad to report that Councillor Baker has offered £500 towards the repair costs from his ward funds and the City of Rochester Society has agreed to consider funding the difference. Thus not for the first time Medway Archives has taken positive action for the preservation of the local documentary heritage with the active involvement, assistance and support of the local community

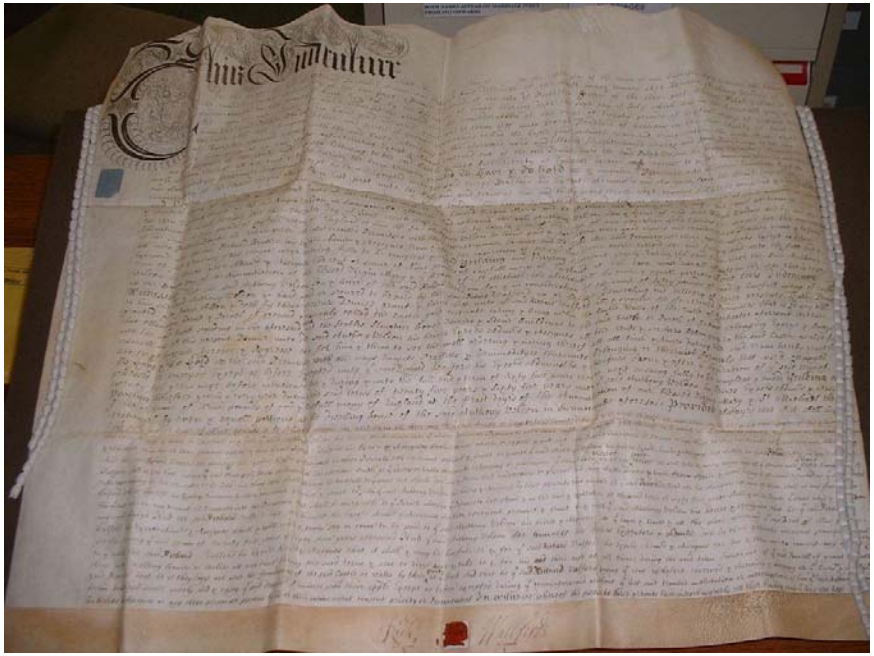
Councillor Ted Baker at the MALSC annual Mince Pie day where the recently discovered 1822 map of Rochester was on display.



The Unveiling and Presentation of the City of Rochester Society's Gift to the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre

Another exciting moment at the Mince Pie Day on 12th December was the unveiling and presentation of yet another document discovered on Ebay.

Brian Jenkins, Chairman of Chatham Historic Dockyard Society, and the indenture document, dated 1696.



A close up of the indenture, dated 1696.

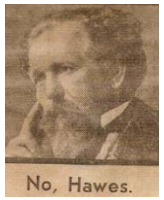
We are grateful to Brian Jenkins, Chairman of Chatham Historic Dockyard Society, and the City of Rochester Society for finding this and for donating it to us. The precise description of the document is as follows.

Counterpart lease or indenture of demise for 25 years and 65 years, parties Anthony Weldon of Middle Temple, London, Esq and Richard Walford of Rochester, grocer, to mansion house, parcel of ground called Castle Yard within the walls of the Castle of Rochester, with the said Castle standing in the aforesaid Yard and the stables, slaughterhouse, towers and stone buildings except for rents and services, reciting previous lease of 6 July 1668 between Ralph Weldon of Swanscombe Esq father of Anthony above and George Bradford of Cobham, gardener for consideration of £20 for 31 years at rent of £9 p.a.; also reciting former lease of 7 June 1682 between Anthony Weldon and Richard Bowles, consideration £10 for 25 years at rent of £9 p.a., consideration: £50, rent: £9 p.a., dated 1696; with covenants to keep the castle in structural repair. Witnessed by Sarah Baker and Thomas George. With applied armorial seal (DE1167).

Dickens Versus Hawes!

The Early Years

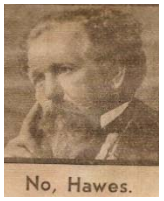
Dickens was born in Portsmouth of humble parentage, his mother and father being servants to the Crewe family. On removal from Chatham to London he was forced to work in a blacking factory, his father, John, having been committed to the Marshalsea debtors' prison at Southwark. As a young man, deprived of a formal education, Dickens did everything in his power to improve his fortune. He learned Latin, mathematics and later taught himself shorthand in order to assist with his writing.



Hawes' childhood was spent in Bodmin, and as a teenager he was apprenticed to the local blacksmith. Hawes' father worked at Bodmin prison, and fell heavily into debt. One morning he said goodbye to the family, went to the prison and took his life by cutting his own throat. The navy was Hawes' college, learning his trade as an armourer, which incorporated the many metalwork skills which benefited us all in his later life. Seamanship, discipline and self- sufficiency were all absorbed at an early age. Life at sea necessitated handcraft and Hawes was a skilled knitter, could crochet beautifully, make mats, mend shoes, cut hair and make toys.

The Entertainer

Dickens would amuse his friends with mimicry, using the current popular artistes and singers of the day as his models. He staged plays at a toy theatre at the Wellington House Academy, where he taught the subject he himself had only recently acquired. Dickens must have had a wonderful voice for the delivery of prose as he undertook innumerable readings, all without the aid of a microphone. Dickens and his characters were well known at The Bull Hotel, Rochester.



Hawes entertained both in the navy and in civilian life, and was a member of a Gilbert and Sullivan company. He had a fine bass voice and would entertain the old folk in Chatham with songs such as *Drake is Going West*, *Lad* and *The Road to Mandalay*. He was a great spinner of tales of life in China, India, and Egypt, most of them true, but with some embellishment. Hawes too, could be seen frequently at The Bull Hotel, Rochester.

From the pictorial diaries of J.T. Hawes held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.
"A thoughtful study - what dreams"

Towards the end of his life, my grandfather was still in demand as Dickens. When the 1946 film of *Great Expectations* was being filmed in Rochester and the Hoo peninsula, Hawes was taken down to the set and photographed with two of its stars, Bernard Miles (who played Joe Gargery) and Freda Jackson (Mrs. Joe Gargery) . Poignantly, Hawes was also photographed at Gad's Hill in Higham, sitting at the great man's desk in his library. Sadly, this was to be J.T. Hawes' last appearance as Dickens, though unlike the great author he did not die at Gad's Hill, but rather at the Royal Naval Hospital, Chatham.

From the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre Couchman collection:
Tinted postcard photograph entitled Rochester, Gad's Hill *comprising view of northern elevation of Gadshill Place, Gravesend Road, Higham, looking from north-east corner of garden, showing in foreground part of lawn and drive and in background house, porch, shrubs and trees. c.1910 DE402/24/p.39 (L)*

Accessions

Additional records of High Halstow Parish Council from 1955 (DE1162; P167/PC).
Additional records of Darenth Parish Church including photographs of parish activities 1900-1990 (DE1164; P109).

Twydall Parish Church parish magazines 1955-2006 (DE1165; P153K). This is a timely reminder that parish magazines contain much information of local historical and genealogical interest, reporting marriages, calling of banns, baptisms, funerals, churchings and confirmations as well as *newsy* articles, all especially useful if several generations of a family lived in the same place. It is always pleasing to receive a complete and long run of parish magazines.
Records of Enon Strict Baptist Church, 33 Nelson Road, Chatham 1843-1954 (DE1166; N/B/85).

Letter from George Payne, The Precinct, Rochester, on Kent Archaeological Society headed paper, to a Mr. [A.A.?] Arnold [of Cobhambury, Cobham, FSA?], describing the excavation of the Rochester City walls, 19 February 1893, 1 item, paper (DE1168 [part]).
Printed book entitled *The Holy Bible Containing the old and new testaments (King James Bible)*, Oxford University Press, formerly part of Archives Office Library (reference OA/LIB/121) This item is believed to have been the Bible used by Medway Poor Law Union at the new union workhouse and infirmary, latterly All Saints' Hospital, Magpie Hall Road, Chatham, and came into the possession of Mr. R. Foster of the Chatham Charity Trustees (see collection LBG)] 1835 (M173).

Account of John Williams with executors of Robert Child Esq, deceased, for rents and profits of Castle Yard and Garden, Rochester mainly for property tax and partly pertaining to arrears of William Stephens, insolvent, deceased, 1804 (1 item, paper) and draft copy of appointment of piece of land and hereditaments comprising 17 perches in Gillingham, abutting at the front towards Chatham High Street to the south-west, near Chatham Hill, in the rear towards the land of [-] Maddox to the north-east (occupied by John Phelby), and land of [-] Mace (occupied by James Pigeon), part of Hards Town, and towards the south-east Quarrington House and to the north-west messuage, garden and premises of heirs of Thomas Gilbert deceased, (occupied by Philip Lewis), said land formerly occupied by Thomas Burford, Thomas Stevens, Charles Thompson or last mentioned's undertenants William Pearce, James Turner and Richard Pearce, parties William Smith and Miss Mary Ann Smith, 7 May 1844 (1 sheaf, paper) (M171).
I am delighted to say these items were purchased by FOMA on Ebay and donated to us so this deposit represents an exciting new development for FOMA and MALSC and serves as a sign of things to come.

Draft deed relating to right of way between Short Brothers' works, Rochester and Borstal, parties Messrs Short Brothers (Rochester and Bedford Ltd.) and Rochester City Council, with plan, 14 February 1927, signed and embossed [Incomplete] (M170).

Photocopies of lease of two messuages or tenements near Hollow Way, Frindsbury, parties Smith and Butler 1801 and division by Gavelkind of two messuages or tenements in High Street, St. Nicholas' parish, Rochester, parties Hales and Hales 1712, 3 sheets (M169)

Letter from J [?] Barnard, Clerk, Guardians and Trustees of the Poor of St. Nicholas' Parish, Rochester, to the Overseers of the Poor, Dartford, asking for their intervention in respect of Widow Russell, her eldest son and three other children, 22 July 1831 1 item, paper (M168).

Additional records of Gillingham Borough Council, comprising deposited building plans for St. Augustine's Church, Rock Avenue, Gillingham, by Temple Moore, 44 Bedford Row, London WC1, architect and Samuel Sherwin and Son, Boston, Lincolnshire, builders, plan number 5844, 1 sheaf, 5 sheets, starched linen; alterations submitted November 1935; restored to series at GBC/BP/5844 (M167).

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Office Moves

Our regular visitors will be aware that Medway Council is relocating from three main office complexes throughout the Medway Towns to a single site at Gun Wharf in Chatham. As part of this process, the sections of the council remaining behind at the Civic Centre site for another two to five years, including MALSC, will be subject to some behind the scenes office moves. Apart from a closure period of 11th to 16th February, there may be some temporary disruption while building and refurbishment work is in progress throughout February and March. We apologise for any inconvenience and thank you for your forbearance in advance. On completion of the works our public service will continue as normal.

I must confess I was a little bit apprehensive as to this scene. It was a somewhat hazardous and difficult one I thought. The scene was carried through with the utmost delicacy. The impersonator of Charles Dickens walked quite alone down the lawn amid cheers of the audience.

I was deeply touched. It was a scene which called for my tribute and thanks to all engaged, a tribute which I gladly offer.'

It is not too difficult to imagine the feelings this article stirred in my grandfather's heart. Sir Henry did, of course, meet up with Hawes and would have then realised that he wore no make-up or artifice of any kind – he *was* Charles Dickens. Sir Henry also said that he even had his father's walk and mannerisms. Uncanny.

From the pictorial diaries of J.T. Hawes held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre. John Thomas Hawes and the cast of the Rochester Historical Pageant, 1931.

Needless to say, the Pageant had been a huge success, and so great was the public's enthusiasm for the event, an additional performance had to be given. The fuse lit in that summer of 1931 continued to burn brightly for John T. Hawes. Other pageants, including one in Gravesend, demanded his appearance. In l932, at a dinner of The Dickens Fellowship, Lady Dickens sent a pencilled note down the table, requesting a meeting with the *Dickens' Double*; regrettably, no record of their conversation exists. The Dickens Fellowship and Rochester Dickensian Society, hosted many such gatherings, some at Bleak House, and all featuring this energetic man, J. T. Hawes. In l933, Lord Darnley wrote inviting Mr. Hawes to participate in a Theatrical Garden Party at Laughing Water near Rochester. Serving cocktails at the bar was Jeanne de Cassalis (does anyone remember Mrs. Feather on the wireless?) and Douglas Byng was also in attendance. We all know that the early 1930s were *Hard Times* for many, yet these numerous happy gatherings - and I am sure that there were so many more that went unrecorded - speak to me of the out-going and convivial air that was abroad in Medway at this time: folk ready to lose their inhibitions, don frock coats, long petticoats, bonnets and trip many a measure.

From the pictorial diaries of J.T. Hawes held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.
"Old Rochester, dear City that I love!"

The critic Arthur Coles Armstrong, writing in *The Stage* on July 2nd l93l said:
'To me the Spirit of Rochester in this Pageant *was* Charles Dickens, who was an actor as well as a writer. Then out of the greyness of the shadowy old pile and in a silence broken only by the twittering of birds, a quiet bare-headed middle aged man appeared and we held our breath. Dickens died on June 9th l870, as we all know, but here he walked again, slowly and sedately as one burdened with a weight of thought and full of a love of mankind – which to him was the same thing – towards his living son. It was the same head of hair, the same beard, the same tailed coat, and quaint, fancy waistcoat. The likeness was almost uncanny. A wonderful *entrance* my theatrical masters, The Spirit of Rochester'.

The week following the Pageant, Sir Henry Fielding Dickens, son of the famous man, wrote to *The Times*:
'On Saturday last I opened the 6th day of the Pageant at Rochester, which was Dickens Day.

It appears to me that justice has not been done to this really wonderful and beautiful show. It is for this reason that I am anxious to say how it struck me.

The natural setting was in itself perfect. There were 5,000 performers who at one part of the show were massed in one immense body. To train, marshal and arrange so large a number required in itself the highest skill and experience in the Master of the Pageant and those assisting him.

I do not think I have seen anything which has given me greater pleasure or one that more thoroughly deserves public recognition. There was one episode to which I wish particularly to refer. It was entitled *Dickens' Last Vision of Rochester* in which my father is represented as sitting in the shrubbery at Gad's Hill on the day he was stricken.

Edwin Harris – Recollections of Rochester

Janet Knight, Local Studies, MALSC

Janet Knight has worked at Medway Archives and Local Studies for over 16 years. She started work as assistant to Pat Salter and later transferred to Local Studies, working with Norma Crowe. Pat Salter's interest in Edwin Harris fired Janet's own enthusiasm and she has become another eager member of the Edwin fan club. Janet is often heard to say, "I wonder what Edwin has to say on the matter…"

In the second of her series, Janet reproduces Edwin Harris' thoughts on Eastgate, from his 1930 work, Recollections of Rochester.

Edwin Harris really was a man of many parts, which is why Pat Salter has named her recent book thus. Harris was a printer in Rochester High Street, a city guide, a writer, a druid, a special constable, an antiquarian, and a Dickensian. One needs to read his *Recollections of Rochester* to truly understand this very busy and dedicated man fully. However, his friends probably summed him up in the most memorable way in the wording of a tablet placed in Rochester Museum removed from the wall at some time before 1970. It has recently been rediscovered at the museum, and whilst the wording is now faint, it is still legible, just like the man himself:

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF EDWIN HARRIS:
WHO PLAYED A CONSPICUOUS PART IN ITS FOUNDING AND WHO BY MANY GIFTS GREATLY ENRICHED IT. DURING A LONG LIFETIME HE DEVOTED HIMSELF TO EXTOL THE FAME OF THIS CITY, AND FROM HIS WELL-STORED MIND TO TEACH BY HIS WRITINGS, BY HIS LECTURES, AND BY HIS CONSTANT GUIDANCE OF VISITORS, THE HISTORIC INCIDENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF CHARLES DICKENS UPON WHICH ITS FAME SECURELY RESTS.
BORN.1859. DIED.1938

In his *Recollections of Rochester*, Harris gives a fascinating description of Eastgate, which begins with a reference to number 89, which is now known as the *Olde Curiositie Shop*, number 151 Eastgate, or High Street, Rochester.

'In the Autumn of 1861 my father moved to 89, Eastgate, Rochester.

When my father purchased the printing business from E. Henwood, a fellow apprentice previously at Baxter's *Sussex Express*, Lewes, the business was carried on in a large room on the ground floor of a building at the rear of Mr. Francis John Dawson's furniture warehouse in Eastgate. At the new premises my father was enabled to carry on the printing business as well as finding living accommodation; in those days every tradesman lived over his business premises.

Eastgate was commonly thought to comprise all the buildings eastwards of Eastgate House, those people on the westward side usually designating their address as High Street, Rochester. In the directory of 1856 it states: *Eastgate commences at the end of Free School Lane, a short distance from the Free School in High Street, and terminates at the Horse and Groom.*

The above gives the exact locality of Eastgate. It should really be *Eastgate Without,* i.e. without the city walls as *Bishopsgate Within* and *Bishopsgate Without.* Anyway the business people residing in and carrying on business in Eastgate always styled their address as Eastgate, although the numbering of High Street was continued through and beyond Eastgate.

Eastgate of seventy years ago had an aspect quite different from that of today; many old buildings have disappeared entirely, others have been rebuilt or so modernised as to be entirely unlike the original. So too, have the dress and style of the inhabitants of Eastgate changed. A walk round St. Nicholas burying ground under the Castle Wall, brings back to my mind the neighbours of those long gone-by times; I read their names and their virtues inscribed on their tomb stones, and the tombstones fade, and with my mind's eye I see once more a living picture of those whose mortal remains are fast hastening to decay.'

Eastgate House,
from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

A Man of Many Parts - Edwin Harris of Rochester by Pat Salter is available, price £8.95, from the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, and other local outlets. It can also be purchased direct from the publishers (http://www.city-of-rochester.org.uk), the City of Rochester Society, 32 Powlett Road, Frindsbury, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4RD, adding £2.00 for postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to *The City of Rochester Society*.

From the pictorial diaries of J.T. Hawes held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

John Thomas Hawes and Frank Lascelles, Lord of the Manor of Sibson Gower, Oxfordshire and Master of the Rochester Historical Pageant, 1931

Reading the old programmes I note that a cast of 5,000 souls were involved in this production: actors, dancers, musicians, riders. All were needed. What an incredible undertaking in the times before email, mobile phones and texts; just good communication, planning and, no doubt, loyalty and hard work to a high degree. My grandfather could have had no idea of the impact he would make in the role of Charles Dickens. The honing of the part and the learning of his lines had a marked effect on the close family, and my mother would often recall that his opening words, "Old Rochester – dear City that I love!" were written indelibly on their hearts. However, imagine my delight (and I confess to some emotion) when I was privileged last year to watch a film of the pageant on the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre's *Medway MovieBase*: http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/query/results/?Mode=Search&SearchMode=explorer&SearchWords=Z4c_MovieBase_22&DateList=&.submit=Submit+Query&Exact=Yes&Boolean=AND&Results=25&PathList=%2FZ4c_Medway_MovieBase%2F&.cgifields=Verbose&.cgifields=Exact

There was my grandfather, and that famous opening speech captured for ever on film. I immediately knew those words, "Old Rochester..."

Dickensian Days

Jean Slater

The front cover of the last issue of The Clock Tower *(08, November 2007) featured John Thomas Hawes, Mayor of Chatham, grandfather of FOMA member Jean Slater. Born in Chatham in 1932, Jean was fortunate in being old enough to share some of the thrills and pageantry that came with her grandfather's role as Mayor from 1938 to 1945. Now living in Felpham, West Sussex, Jean keeps her ties with Chatham through family and the Old Girls' Association of the Chatham Grammar School.*

To follow is the first of a series of three articles containing extracts and photographs from the pictorial diaries of J.T. Hawes, now held at the Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre.

John Thomas Hawes, one of thirteen brothers, was born in Coventry in 1878, and spent his early life in Bodmin. Charles Dickens, who had died some eight years earlier, spent several harrowing months of his childhood apprenticed to a blacking factory; young Hawes was apprenticed to the local blacksmith. He and three of his brothers also sang in St. Petroc's Parish Church, Bodmin, however, he longed to cut his ties. Although under age, a young Hawes talked his way into the navy, and his knowledge of smithying led him to be signed on as an armourer.

Hawes' naval career lasted until 1919, which was when fate stepped in and Chatham became his adopted home. Photos of him as a naval officer in 1908 show the beard and hair that were to become his trademark, though then trimmed to naval regulation length. Hawes continued working in Chatham, in insurance, and largely in the dockyard, maintaining his naval connections. He raised a family of two and designed and built three houses. In 1931 fate stepped in once again with an event which would be acclaimed for years to come as one of the high spots in the social and historical life of Rochester: a pageant, to be held from 22nd to 27th June.

In the months prior to the staging of the pageant, it seemed everyone was involved in its planning, including its producer, Frank Lascelles, who had the glorious title, Master of the Pageant. One day, he was walking in Chatham High Street when he saw Mr. Hawes. So struck was he by Hawes' close resemblance to Charles Dickens, the Master offered him the part of Dickens in the Pageant there and then.

The Great Fires of Chatham

John Witheridge

John Witheridge is the FOMA Vice Chairman and Press Officer. He loves history, and specialises in the period 800 to the 1660s, particularly where his own ancestors crop up! A past lecturer in history and family history, John is Past Chairman of the Quaker Family History Society, Chairman of the Council of Family Societies, Past Chairman of the Cornish Forefathers Society, a member of the Guild of One Name Studies, and Press Officer for the Medway branch of the Kent Family History Society. John also finds time to research for any overseas member of the societies with which he is involved.

To most historians any reference to The Great Fires means a nostalgia trip to seventeenth century London and 1666. For most of us here in the Medway Towns, we need only to cast our minds back to the early 1780s, for our own Great Fire.

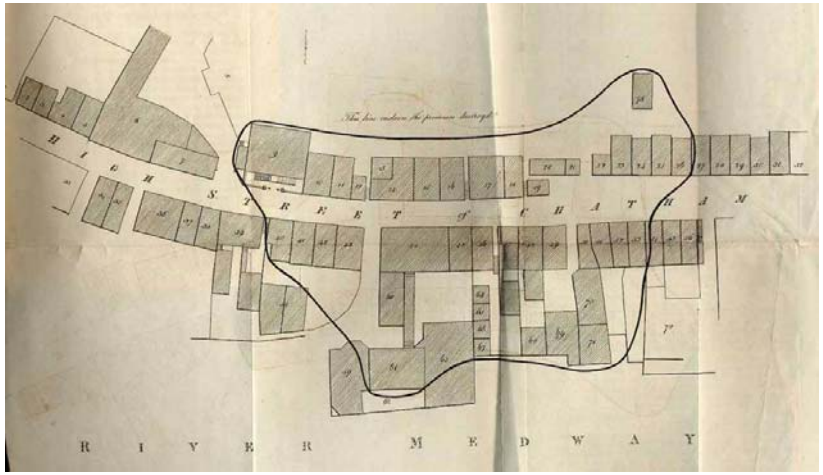
The first recorded great fire in Chatham occurred some 25 to 19 years before the year 1800, in a place now known as the Sun Pier, Medway Street. The *Maidstone Journal*, dated 7th March 1820, also recorded that some 80 to 90 properties fell prey to fire on this occasion, and whilst I have searched high and low, no other facts have emerged.

The next great fire happened at 11.00 am on Monday 30th June 1800 – spoiling many a mother's washing day, no doubt. The weather up to this point of the year had been very dry, and as most of the buildings along the river side were constructed of wooden frames clad with clapper boards, the early summer heat had forced each overlap to spring away and separate. At the river side the ship the Hoy was being unloaded, her cargo in the process of being carried along the wharf to warehouses. A short distance from the ship along the wharf side stood a shed used to store preservative items for making the ships' and wooden structures water tight: tar, oakum, hemp, and various other flammable commodities. Next door to this was a working blacksmith's forge. It was assumed at the time that sparks from the forge penetrated gaps in the structure of the storage shed setting the whole building alight in minutes. The wind spread the sparks to the Hoy causing her sails, sheets and cordage to explode in the air. The wind then carried remnants of burning, white hot canvas towards the town, igniting first the buildings closest to the wharf. The Trumpet ale house and the buildings across the alley leading to Sun Pier burst into flames. The structures to the north side of the High Street passed the fiery terror along, and presently the prevailing wind which was blowing from the north east, caused the fire to spread to both sides of the highway. On the south side of the High Street, a Mr Bassett tried to enter his house to retrieve his property, which included some money he had left there for safe keeping that morning. He was seen no more, leaving behind a widow, heavy with child.

The flames spread to Heavy Sides Lane, now known as Hammonds Hill, and up the hill towards New Road, razing Camden House in its path. The flames, now roaring, tore buildings apart. Three more ale houses were scorched to the ground: The Britannia, The Cross Keys and the Union Flag. Fire breaks were quickly made by pulling down two sets of houses, saving at least one ale house, The Prince of Orange. When the fire was out, Chatham's saviours would have somewhere to slake their burning throats.

Half way down the northern side of the High Street lived a Mrs Dunk with her husband and their young child, still in arms. Mrs Dunk had fled the blaze along with hundreds of other displaced householders. She knew that her husband, a builder, was helping create the fire breaks, and she was worried about him. As she struggled along the street, climbing over discarded charred timbers and dodging burning rubbish in the streets, a chimney stack fell to the ground, crushing Mrs Dunk and her cradled infant. Whilst the Dunks were the only fatalities that day, there were many more who suffered injuries.

Most of the properties damaged by the fire belonged to the Governors of the Chatham Chest, numbering some 32; the Best family also suffered, losing nine properties. The records reveal that many of the Chatham Chest properties were charitable, single dwellings housing 'inmates'. The worst affected victims of the fire were the destitute, severely disabled and needy: naval heroes ditched by the government of the day.



The area affected by the fire (circled).

The Reverend Samuel Barnett, founder of Toynbee Hall and residents, circa 1903-5; Barnett is seated in the centre, William Beveridge sits on the step to Barnett's left.
With the kind permission of Image Bank, Barnett Research Centre at Toynbee Hall.

the ways in which the political parties saw young people and what they thought about how young people should be prepared to become *good* citizens. Likewise, if you are researching charities who want the state to take on more responsibility for the poor, you need to know what the political parties thought at that particular time.

I learned a lot during my doctoral years: in terms of subject matter, I now know more than is probably healthy about the university settlements. But I also learned a great deal about the skills of writing history. I learned how to use archives. Using an archive is simple enough when you know how to order up documents and how to handle them – understanding them is a different matter. Historians need to be able to glean the logic of a document or series of documents. On one level, this is gaining a feel for how and why something was put together, as well as why it was kept. Sometimes what is *not* included in a record is as important as what is written down. Historians also need to be able to get a sense of the people who produced the documents, who took the photographs, who kept the diary. One of the most important documents to me in this way was discovering a minute book of a boys' club. At first I thought the club manager had taken the minutes, but the painstaking efforts at neat handwriting, and guessing at surnames suggested to me that the minute-taker was neither someone accustomed to writing nor confident in asking people to spell their names. This was a powerful discovery as it told me that the boys were given an opportunity to take up leadership roles within their club and I gained further insight into the meaning of the club for the boys.

I hope that this article has given an insight into the ways in which *some* historians train and of the ways in which they work, however, even though most historians in universities have advanced degrees, it would be incorrect to say we have stopped learning. Far from it – we still have much to uncover about British history, and this historian is looking forward to researching and learning more about it.

twentieth-century literature I started work as a volunteer archivist at a charity in East London, Toynbee Hall. From being interested in Modernist literature, I slowly became mesmerised by the question of the development of social services in Britain and I began to work out how I could move disciplines in order to do this. After finishing my MA, I found a full-time job in a comprehensive school in London's East End, which paid the rent, enabled me to do my archivist's job at the weekends and to spend some time away from dissertations and classes to think about what it was I wanted to research. I knew that I was fascinated by the problem of poverty, but still thought like a literature person. At first I wanted to look at the representation of poverty in British society from circa 1880 to the present day – quite an endeavour, but one which my training in literary studies and history would have prepared me for. As I was researching potential supervisors, I came across the Institute of Historical Research and Pat Thane, an eminent historian of social policy, who was interested in my work and who had just moved there from the University of Sussex. Professor Thane talked through my application, and through much encouragement and Socratic questioning, I had found my topic: the university settlements in East London between 1918 and 1979.

The university settlements – of which Toynbee Hall was the first – were set up from 1884 onwards to bring young Oxbridge graduates to deprived areas such as the East End of London so that they could do voluntary service and learn something of what it was to be poor. Many of these 'residents' went on to senior positions in the Civil Service and politics: two of the most famous were William Beveridge and Clement Attlee, the architect and implementer of the British post-1945 Welfare State. Most other historians had looked at the settlements up until the First World War, and their emphasis was largely on the history of these institutions, rather than looking at the ways in which they worked with local communities and the state. I began my research by deciding to look at what other people had not... but with some specific questions in mind. How did these charities work with local communities? What did they have to offer, and to whom? Why were some areas of their work more successful than others? What happened to them with the development of the Welfare State from 1945?

In the course of my research, I used the archives of various charities – Toynbee Hall, Oxford House, Mansfield House and Canning Town Women's Settlement. By this time, I was working part-time as an archivist at Toynbee Hall, which topped up my studentship and gave me access to the archives. I also looked at local newspapers, undertook oral history interviews, made databases of settlement residents, and tracked down newsreel footage of settlement activities. I read widely, not just on the history of settlements in the United Kingdom, but also on the history of welfare and social theory. In my third and final year of my PhD, I had a part-time post as a teaching assistant at Royal Holloway, where I taught British History 1770 to 1990 to second year undergraduates. Preparing for classes helped me to see the bigger picture again, to make links between what was happening in the East End of London and what the situation was elsewhere. It also refreshed my knowledge of British political history – although I was looking at boys' clubs in the East End and how young men used them, it was still important to know about

In total 97 buildings were lost or damaged in Chatham in the great fire of 1800, including the one and only pawnbroker's shop belonging to Mr Frid. The loss of the shop was a disaster for the working population, over one hundred of whom had possibly donated to Frid's safekeeping the only personal items they owned of any worth. However, families helped each other out, the army provided tents for the homeless, brewers provided barrels for water, and a committee was formed to assess people's needs and to pay out some sort of compensation from a nationwide collection. The people of Chatham recovered and the town survived.

Support FOMA at the London Marathon!

The star attraction at MALSC at the moment is without question the newly discovered map of Rochester, dating from 1822 (see *Archives Update*). Janet Knight from Local Studies and John Witheridge, FOMA Vice Chairman, had the privilege of unrolling the map for BBC Television News' South East Today programme:

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/kent/7141122.stm). The item was shown on the television four times and caught the attention of John's eldest daughter, April (pictured). April watched as her father's hands unrolled the map and asked if she could help raise money for its restoration. As a result, April Witheridge will be running for the Friends of the Medway Archives at this year's London Marathon on 13th April 2008. This will be her first attempt, though her sister Cheryl, a veteran of ten London marathons, will be able to give her some tips!

Further information can be obtained from FOMA Vice Chairman John Witheridge, C/o Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4AU. Alternatively, please contact Cindy O'Halloran, Friends' Secretary, at cindy.ohalloran@medway.gov.uk or on +44 (0)1634 332238/332714.

The Skills of the Historian

Dr Kate Bradley

FOMA member, Dr Kate Bradley, was appointed lecturer in social history and social policy at the University of Kent at Medway in October 2007. Prior to that, she took her BA and MA degrees at Goldsmiths College, before taking her PhD at the Institute of Historical Research, where she later held an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship. Her first book, Poverty, Philanthropy and the State: Charities and the Working Classes in London 1918-79 *will be published by Manchester University Press in early 2009.*

As I sat down to write this piece on *being an historian*, it occurred to me that I had spent a remarkable amount of time that week thinking about what an historian *is*. I had been in the process of working in exercises on *history skills* for a course I teach on British history 1900-75, writing up minutes of a meeting of a group to support early career historians, whilst adding the finishing touches to my book, which I was about to send off to its publisher. So I was thinking about how those new to historical studies acquire the skills of learning about and researching the past, the business of what historians do in their profession, and then thinking about the way in which I had put together my historical research. So in this article, I will look at historians' training and my experiences of it.

History is a broad church, not only in the sheer breadth of what it covers as a discipline but also in terms of how anyone can engage with it. The most basic skills needed to undertake historical research include a lively interest in the past, a willingness to critically handle documents and patience in following up leads in archives or secondary sources. Unlike the sciences, where you need access to laboratories and specialist equipment, history is democratic – many of the materials researchers need are online, whilst archives, libraries and museums are as accessible as possible. If we understand the term *historian* to mean a person who undertakes historical research, that can include everyone from primary school children through to those chasing up their family tree to those who work as historians in universities. All have important contributions to make, and can collectively progress the totality of what we know about the human past. But history also operates as a profession.

The historical profession includes many groups. Archivists, librarians and museum curators are members of it, as are school and further education college teachers, along with freelance journalists and television researchers. Many are academically trained in history. But for a lot of people, the *historical profession* means those who have advanced degrees in history and who work in universities. How do people become academic historians? Since the end of the Second World War, the general expansion of higher education has meant that would-be historians have to ensure that they have the right qualifications. Where once people became lecturers with BA degrees – think of the world of Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954) – in the early twenty-first century most people have to have a PhD degree and usually some publications and a fellowship under their belt. The PhD is the apprenticeship into academia. It typically takes three to four years full-time, or five to six part-time. During this period of time, students write a dissertation or thesis, an original piece of research of about 100,000 words, which is overseen by one or two supervisors. They also undertake advanced training in the skills needed by historians, which, depending on their field of study might be in palaeography, in Latin or other languages, in oral history or quantitative methods. The PhD is a rigorous and sustained period of research and writing, but it is also an opportunity for students to become part of the wider academic community. PhD students learn how to give presentations on their work, as well as how to organise conferences and seminars. These skills form part of the ways in which historians learn how to communicate their research findings effectively, but it is also the means by which historians make connections with each other. Going to or giving a seminar paper allows you to meet other people working on similar topics to you, and they can be very sociable occasions. After a day of diligently working through files in an archive or typing up your thesis, this can be very welcome! But the questions and comments that people make after a seminar paper are incredibly important – historians and other academics use the process of peer review to reflect on and shape their work.

Academic history is a team effort – although it is up to the individual researcher to use the archives, to read the books and to write up the research, this work is continuously reviewed by other people with expertise in your field. This means that you get other people's views on your work: they might point out things that you have missed, for example, or make suggestions about how your work connects with something that you had not thought of. If they want to know more about something or did not understand something you mentioned in your presentation, answering their questions can be a way of working things out in your own mind. This is part of the process by which PhD students learn to be historians, but it is also the way in which those historians who work in academia ensure that their methods are rigorous and their conclusions are sound. Historians may look at particular case studies, but they need to state whether or not that case is unique, and why. If it is typical of that time, what new light does it shed on what we know? They need to know what other historians have written on or around the subject – for example, there may be few historical studies on youth crime in Chatham in the 1890s, but there will be studies on youth crime elsewhere. Your findings for Chatham may agree or disagree with what other historians have found, and you might discover that what you have to say changes our understanding of the past in that area. That is the joy of undertaking research in this way: you never know quite what you will stumble upon and the broader implications of it.

The book that I mentioned at the beginning of this article was based on my PhD thesis. I always knew I wanted to do a PhD from quite early on in my undergraduate studies in English and History, but it took me a couple of years to find what it was I really wanted to do. I originally wanted to work on James Joyce, but as I did my Master's degree in